

SAT Practice Essay #6 Example

In "Lovely Stones," Christopher Hitchens pleads for the return of the original Parthenon sculptures to Greece. He argues that parts of the "world's most right structure" were illegally removed and that they should be returned and restored to the building. Hitchens employs historical accounts, literary devices, and emotional appeal to effectively marshal his argument.

Hitchens begins his essay by quoting a great classicist A.W. Lawrence, who once remarked that the Parthenon is "the one building in the world which may be assessed as absolutely right." By referencing the opinion of a classical architect who is certainly qualified on the subject, Hitchens is bolstering his claim that the Parthenon is a national masterpiece.

Hitchens continues to detail historical accounts as how this "beautiful sculptural treasure" has been desecrated over the years. It was closed and desolated five centuries after the birth of Christianity; it was used as a garrison and arsenal by Turkish forces and sustained tremendous damage in 1687; and the "most horrible of all," it was made to fly the Nazi flag during the German occupation of Athens. In citing these past injustices, the author is creating an image of the Parthenon as a beautiful target for invaders that suffered damage, but it has still survived.

The author acknowledges that most of the past damage exacted on the Parthenon cannot be undone, and he even concedes that Athens itself has been responsible for past negligence of the building (until recent restoration). However, Hitchens makes it clear that one prior misdeed can, at least partially, be remedied: The British removal of the building's adornment in the early 19th century. The author continues that subsequent to the unlawful removal ordered by Lord Elgin, he sold the Parthenon's frieze, its most intricate element, to the British government in 1816 to pay of his many debts. Hitchens then applies an apt analogy between the Parthenon's stolen adornments and the hypothetical separation of the Mona Lisa to beg for its rightful return, as he calls the current displays of the Parthenon's parts in London "grotesque."

Hitchens also uses emotional appeal and strong word connotations throughout his essay. He labels past abuses to the Parthenon as "perverted," "mutilated," and "tragic," and describes the British actions as "constipated fashion to cling to what they have so crudely amputated." And to highlight the beauty of the Acropolis Museum, Hitchens uses pleasant diction such as "astonishing," "marvels," "happy," and "destined to be among Europe's finest galleries." These word choices negatively portray the oppressors of the Greek treasure while portraying the idyllic image of the new museum.

At the conclusion of the essay, Christopher Hitchens has masterfully made his argument, and he has elicited sympathy for his position. The Parthenon needs to be restored to its full beauty and the reader will surely agree that the author's position is "right."